



CATAWBA COUNTY

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Public Health

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PREVENTING RABIES FROM AFFECTING YOU

In 2007, 4,120 animals were submitted for rabies testing in North Carolina and 474 of them were found positive. Among these animals were raccoons, skunks, foxes, bats and cats, with raccoons being the most often tested with 245. One of the methods for preventing rabies exposure is to increase the number of people who have been vaccinated for rabies before working directly with animals, such as veterinarians and wildlife personnel. Unfortunately, a shortage of vaccine is preventing these people from getting the vaccine so that people who are actually exposed to rabies will have vaccine available. This vaccine shortage and the large number of animals in our natural environment with rabies, reminds us of the importance of taking necessary precautions to protect ourselves against rabies.

"There have been seven documented cases of rabies in wild animals in Catawba County so far this year," said Doug Urland, Catawba County Public Health Director. "We encourage the public to protect their health by taking appropriate steps to prevent rabies exposure."

Actions you can take to reduce the likelihood of you or your pet's exposure to rabies include:

- All dogs, cats, ferrets, valuable livestock, horses and animals that have frequent contact with humans should be vaccinated against rabies.
- Do not let your pets roam free.
- Do not feed or water your pet outside because empty bowls can attract wild and stray animals.
- Keep garbage securely covered so it will not attract wild or stray animals.
- Wild animals should not be kept as pets.
- Teach children never to handle unfamiliar animals – even if they appear friendly.
- If you see a wild animal acting strangely, report it to city or county animal control officials.
- Bat-proof your home in the fall and winter.
- If your pet bites someone or is bitten by another animal, contact your local health department or local animal control immediately.

If you are bitten by an animal, wash the wound thoroughly with soap and water for at least 15 minutes and contact your physician immediately. Report the bite to the local health department. Prompt and appropriate action after being bitten, and before the disease develops, can stop rabies infection and prevent the disease.

Catawba County Public Health has a long history of working with and serving the public health needs of Catawba residents by providing clinical, environmental and health education programs critical to the well-being of the community.

Information about rabies, its prevention, and updates on the rabies vaccine situation may be obtained on the CDC rabies website <http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/> or by calling 1-800-CDC-INFO. The rabies web site will be updated as new information becomes available.

Catawba County Public Health's vision is leading the way to a healthier community. For more information, you may call 828-695-5800 or visit www.catawbacountync.gov/phealth or www.nphw.org. You may also contact Catawba County Animal Services at 828-464-7686.

"Keeping the Spirit Alive Since 1842!"

